IX. *Violent Aſthmatic Fits, occaſioned by the Effluvia of* Ipecacoanha. *By* William Scott, *M. D. of* Stamfordham, Northumberland.

R. Dec. 21, 1775. MRS. S. of Stamfordham, in Northumberland, married a perſon of the medical faculty in the year 1759, being then about twenty-ſix years of age. She had been always remarkably healthy before that period, and quite free from all nervous or other complaints, except a trifling nervous head-ach that uſed to affect her temples and forehead, ſometimes for a night or ſo, about the time of her menſtruation. The firſt year or two after marriage ſhe enjoyed her uſual good health and ſpirits in general; but at times ſhe was afflicted with a very troubleſome ſhortneſs of breathing, attended with a remarkable ſtricture about her throat and breaſt, and with a particular kind of wheezing noiſe. Theſe fits came on very ſuddenly, and without any previous cauſe that at firſt could be aſſigned; and were often ſo violent as to threaten immediate ſuffocation. The duration of them was uncertain, ſometimes longer and ſometimes ſhorter; but in general they went off in two or three days, and commonly with a ſpitting of a tough phlegm, which, ſhe ſaid, had a diſagreeable metallic taſte. When theſe fits were off, ſhe enjoyed her uſual good health and ſpirits: had

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children; but ſuffered as little as any woman could do, either in breeding or lying-in; and it was not obſerved, that ſhe was more ſubject to theſe fits when with child than at other times. She was blooded, and took ſome common pectoral medicines for them; but without any benefit. About a year and a half, or two years, after her marriage, ſhe told her huſband, that ſhe obſerved theſe fits always attacked her when any *Ipecacoanha* was powdered in his ſhop; and that ſhe was certain the effluvia of that medicine immediately brought them on. This was looked upon at firſt as a fancy, and little regard paid to it for ſome time. However, frequently after this, when any of that medicine was powdering or putting up, ſhe uſed immediately to call out, perhaps from a different room, that ſhe found the *ipecacoanha*, and that they would ſee her immediately affected by it. This I, and ſeveral others, ſaw frequently happen as ſhe had ſaid; ſo that we were at laſt convinced, to a demonſtration, that the effluvia of the medicine, ſome how or other, ſo affected her nerves, as to bring on a very great and remarkable degree of ſpaſm all about her throat and breaſt. Having thus had ſeveral repeated proofs of the effects the medicine had upon her, great precaution was therefore taken for ſeveral years never to pound any of it, but to purchaſe it powdered; and alſo care was taken, when weighing or putting any of it up, to ſend her out of the way, or to ſome diſtant part of the houſe. By theſe means ſhe was kept pretty clear of it for ſeven or eight years together, during which time ſhe enjoyed perfect good health.

Betwixt nine and ten o'clock in the evening, June 3, 1775, her huſband happening to have got a quantity of the *pulv. ipecacoanha* home, without conſidering opened it out, and put it into a bottle: his wife not being far off at the time, and then in perfect good health, immediately, almoſt even before it was got quite into the bottle, called out that ſhe felt the *ipecacoanha* affect her throat; on which ſhe was immediately ſeized with the ſtricture upon her breaſt and difficulty of breathing. She was adviſed to walk out into the air, to try if that would remove it; but it had little or no effect. She went to bed ſome little time afterwards; was exceedingly ill all night; and betwixt two and three o'clock next morning (June 4th) I ſaw her, when ſhe was gaſping for breath at a window, was as pale as death, her pulſe ſcarce to be felt, and in ſhort ſeemed evidently to be in the utmoſt danger of ſuffocation. She had ſeven or eight ounces of blood taken from her arm, her feet put into warm water, an anodyne draught with ſeven or eight drops of *laudanum* given her, and took frequently a table ſpoonful of oil of almonds. None of theſe ſeemed to have the leaſt effect: and ſhe continued much in the ſame way, with few or no intervals of eaſe, till about nine o'clock that morning; when, being in a manner almoſt exhauſted, ſhe fell into a kind of diſturbed ſleep, the difficulty of breathing with a wheezing noiſe ſtill continuing with little abatement. She ſlept ſome little time, and got out of bed again about eleven o'clock that forenoon; her breathing ſtill very difficult, and her eyes looked red and

a little inflamed. After ſhe got up, ſhe became eaſier towards the afternoon, and it was then ſuppoſed it would go off. Dr. BROWN, an eminent phyſician of Newcaſtle upon Tyne, happening to be in the neighbourhood, called upon Mrs. S.; and being told what had happened, ſaid he had known a caſe, pretty much ſimilar, from the ſame cauſe; and hoped, as ſhe then ſeemed better, it would ſoon go off; recommended to her riding out as ſoon ſhe was able, and to be kept open. Towards bed-time the ſame evening (June 4th) the difficulty of breathing returned, and ſhe was again exceedingly ill all night; had flannel cloths wrung out of warm water applied to her feet, breaſt, and throat, with little or no advantage; was blooded again about four o'clock next morning (June 5th), and had alſo a bliſter applied to the back part of her neck, ſtill continuing to take now and then a ſpoonful of the oil of almonds. She again fell into ſome ſleep about nine in the morning, and continued in bed till betwixt eleven and twelve: got up, and was again a little eaſier during the day; but at night was as bad as ever. And the ſame ſcene was continued for eight days and nights ſucceſſively; that is, ſhe was generally a little eaſier from about eleven o'clock of the forenoon, although ſtill far from well, till towards ten or eleven at night, when the ſhortneſs of breathing always returned very violently. However, after eight days ſhe began to get better reſt at nights; the aſthmatic fits were neither ſo long nor ſo violent; and in about fourteen days from the accident were almoſt entirely

gone off; and at the writing of this letter, Auguſt 1, 1775, although ſhe is now in very good health, ſhe has not yet quite recovered her uſual fleſh, ſtrength, and colour. Beſides the abovementioned medicines, ſhe took at times, during the firſt eight days, ſmall quantities of an emulſion of *ſperma ceti*, *lac. ammoniac.* and *ſucc. liquorit.*; had a doſe of cooling phyſic; rode and walked out a little ſometimes; had a few anodyne draughts with ſeven or eight drops of *laudanum*; but it could not be obſerved that ſhe got any benefit from them, except that ſhe ſometimes thought the oil of almonds gave her a little eaſe. She had a ſlight appearance of the *menſes* about four or five days after the accident happened, although it was then only about the middle of the uſual period; coughed up at times ſome ſmall quantities of blood, and had alſo ſome mixed with her ſtools and urine. The reaſon why the *laudanum*, the moſt effectual and univerſal anti-ſpaſmodic, was uſed in ſuch ſmall quantities, was, that it was known before that, ſhe could never bear above eight or nine drops of it, as the common doſe uſed to affect her with violent ſickneſs at ſtomach, giddineſs and pain in her head, &c. to ſo great a degree, that for ſome years paſt, ſhe neither would take, nor durſt her huſband adminiſter, a larger doſe to her. At the time the above accident happened, ſhe was neither with child, nor had had any for ſome years before.

The above effects of *ipecacoanha*, I believe, very ſeldom happen, and no doubt ariſe from ſome peculiarity of conſtitution. Medical writers, at leaſt as far as I can recollect

recollect at preſent, ſeem to have taken little or no notice of its ever producing ſuch an effect as the above. QUINCEY, however, if I remember right, mentions its producing aſthmas; but then he ſeems to mean, that it has that effect ſometimes when taken internally, but not by means of its effluvia.

Mr. LEIGHTON, a reputable ſurgeon and apothecary in Newcaſtle, told me, that the effluvia of *ipecacoanha* had the very ſame effect upon his wife, as it is above deſcribed to have had upon Mrs. S.; and that he had once, in particular, very near loſt her from having ſome of it powdered in his ſhop.

The *ipecacoanha* which had the above effects upon Mrs. S. was the common officinal aſh-coloured or grey kind.

Mrs. S. has now (Oct. 20, 1775) quite recovered her fleſh, ſtrength, colour, &c. I have ſometimes thought ſince, that perhaps muſk in pretty large doſes might have been of ſervice to her.

X. *An*